

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

December 12, 2025

The Honorable David Fink
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Fink:

I am pleased to support the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), in partnership with Amtrak, the Midwest Intercity Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC), and the State Transportation Departments of Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, and Washington's application for the Federal Railroad Administration's FY 2024-2025 National Railroad Partnership Program. An award for the proposed '*Overhauls for Safe Operations of the Charger Locomotive Fleet Project*' will improve the state of good repair and ensure safe operations for state-owned Charger locomotives. It would further enable continued improvements in system reliability and allow for future expansion of state supported passenger rail routes.

The partner states, in coordination with Amtrak, developed a plan for major midlife overhauls on the state-owned Charger locomotives to ensure safe, reliable, and on-time performance of multiple state supported passenger rail routes, including:

- Blue Water: Port Huron, MI – Chicago, IL
- Cascades: Seattle, WA – Portland, OR
- Hiawatha: Milwaukee, WI – Chicago, IL
- Illini & Saluki: Carbondale, IL – Chicago, IL
- Illinois Zephyr & Carl Sandburg: Quincy – Chicago, IL
- Lincoln Service: St. Louis, MO – Chicago, IL
- Pere Marquette: Grand Rapids, MI – Chicago, IL
- Missouri River Runner: St. Louis – Kansas City
- Wolverine: Pontiac MI – Chicago, IL

Together these states, in partnership with Amtrak, support mobility and connection to and for people, families, and businesses across both large and small communities. These routes enhance the economic viability of rural and urban communities throughout the Midwest and Pacific Northwest by promoting tourism, connecting families, supporting education, and catalyzing local

economic development. The State Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) completed the Economic Benefits of State-Supported Passenger Rail Services: A Report for the United States Congress in July 2025 which estimated that these nine state-supported routes generate over 8,600 jobs or roughly \$580 million in earnings.

To leverage and build upon the existing investments by the States, it is critical to provide continued, improved reliable and safe service for these routes by ensuring the timely and critical mid-life overhauls of the Midwest and Pacific Northwest Charger locomotives. The overhauls for the 41-unit Charger locomotive fleet, scheduled to take place between 2026 and 2031, are required to continue service along the nine routes and address current concerns over the decreasing availability of these units. Major assemblies and systems included in this program are wheel sets, air compressor overhauls, traction motors, turbochargers, high-pressure fuel pumps and diesel engines. Other items are also included as identified in the manufacturers' Life Cycle Cost submittal.

Federal funding would greatly reduce the barriers to continuing the successful initiation of the state-supported services as partners support and expand passenger rail routes in their states. As such, I request that full and fair consideration be given to WisDOT's application. Please keep my office updated on the progress of this application by email at projects_grants@baldwin.senate.gov. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator